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## NEWS ANALYSIS

### Bush faces war now at home

### Big opposition to tax cut, other domestic priorities

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There were no protesters aboard the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln.

The immaculately scrubbed deck-turned-television-studio contained no opposing members of Congress, no dissenting economists, no partisan enemies, wobbly allies or out-of-work techies to muddle the president's triumphant moment.

The roars of approval from thousands of sailors framed by the calm blue sea provided an apple-pie backdrop to what appeared to many to be a magic moment. Unfortunately for Bush, the magic moment is not one from which he can govern.

This morning, Bush returns to the mainland to promote his tax-cut plan in Silicon Valley, where even his post-war swagger may not be enough to overcome fierce resistance to his domestic agenda.

Rep. Mike Honda, the Democratic congressman whose district the president will visit this morning, declined an invitation to stand beside the commander in chief, saying "I don't think it would be appropriate" to share the podium at a Santa Clara defense facility where Bush will promote his tax cuts.

Across the country, the opposition of two senators from the president's own party -- George Voinovich of Ohio and Olympia Snowe of Maine -- seemed to doom the economic plan that is at the top of Bush's legislative priorities.

"We have difficult work to do," Bush said Thursday evening, referring to the task ahead in Iraq. But he might as easily have been talking about domestic policies.

His economic plan is short of votes, his prescription drug plan is going nowhere, his energy proposals are on hold and his judicial nominees are being blocked by the Senate's Democratic minority.

For all the White House's efforts to drape Bush in patriotic and military symbols at every appearance, there is little evidence that his wartime popularity is paying domestic dividends.

"There is nothing in the polling data to suggest that the improvement in Bush's foreign policy ratings translates into greater support for domestic policy proposals," said UC San

Diego political science Professor Gary Jacobson.

"Both politicians and ordinary voters are sophisticated enough in their responses to disconnect the two," Jacobson said.

An ABC/Washington Post poll released Thursday showed that while Americans express strong confidence in Bush's leadership skills and job performance, only a quarter favor Bush's tax cut over more government spending, and a majority of respondents better trust Democrats to create new jobs.

Bush said he learned from his father's experience after the Gulf War a decade ago that a president has to spend political capital when he's got it. But midway through his first term, the younger Bush is learning that it is not so easy to spend.

There has been nothing subtle about the White House's attempts to turn the warm feelings for Bush as commander in chief into support for his domestic priorities. When Bush talked tax cuts in Lima, Ohio, last week, he stood before two M-1 Abrams tanks. The week before, an F-18 fighter jet was the backdrop.

This morning, as Bush travels to a region that has lost more than 325,000 jobs in the past year -- more than half in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties -- he will visit the designer of the Bradley fighting vehicle as he pitches his \$550 billion tax cut plan as a job growth package.

Bush aides hope the war's end will mark a boost in support for a tax cut, insisting that the media's focus on the fighting is in part responsible for the public's lackluster support for the economic plan.

"The president will demonstrate that leaders in Washington can walk and chew gum, meaning we can focus on our national security and our economic security at the same time," said White House Communications Director Dan Bartlett.

But history suggests that military triumphs rarely translate directly into domestic success.

"War is often a crucible for domestic policy change, but to transform your triumph in war to enacting your domestic agenda is difficult," said Allan Lichtman, a presidential historian at American University in Washington.

World War II helped bring about desegregation, income tax withholding and the GI Bill of Rights, Lichtman noted. But it was not enough to provide a mandate for President Harry Truman.

"War produces upheaval within society, but presidents cannot necessarily dictate and control that change," Lichtman said.

Nelson Polsby, a professor of political science at UC Berkeley, said the lack of support for Bush's agenda was apparent after the split presidential election of 2000 but harder to recognize after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"If ever a man received a mandate to be moderate, it was him," Polsby said. "My view is

that he has betrayed his mandate."

The public's support based on Sept. 11 and the Iraq war "is beginning to fray a little," Pilsbry said. "I cannot predict the rate of decay, but I can predict with utter confidence that it will decay."

Many Democrats, timid to criticize Bush's conduct in war, have shown no such restraint when it comes to attacking his domestic policies.

"We're glad that the war on Iraq is over with, but I don't think his success is going to effect our judgment on the economy," Honda said.

Asked whether Bush's success in Iraq would make it more difficult to fight his tax cut in Congress, House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of San Francisco offered an unhesitating "no."

"The 'success' of the president's foreign policies doesn't give (the unemployed) a job," Pelosi said.

"They see that we have a war to pay for that is costly, and then they see that there are deficits . . . and then we're giving a tax cut, which will largely benefit the wealthiest in our country," Pelosi said. "It doesn't add up, and they know it."

As Bush arrives in the Bay Area, Democrats have scheduled several news events that will make clear that the unity aboard the aircraft carrier is not an endorsement of the president's policies.

"We welcome President Bush to Silicon Valley," Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, said on the eve of his arrival. "And while he's here, he should explain why saddling future generations with a \$12 trillion national debt is sound economic policy."

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